

our requests to aid our Nation to hunt down, to find, to smoke out of their holes the terrorist organization that is the prime suspect. And I am pleased with his response. We will continue to work with Pakistan and India. We will work with Russia. We will work with the nations that one would have thought a couple of years ago would have been impossible to work with—to bring people to justice but, more than that, to win the war against terrorist activity.

The American people are used to a conflict where there was a beachhead or a desert to cross or known military targets. That may occur. But right now we're facing people who hit and run. They hide in caves. We'll get them out.

The other day I said, not only will we find those who have affected America or who might affect America in the future, we'll also deal with those who harbor them.

September 11 National Security Decisions

Q. Mr. President, would you confirm what the Vice President said this morning, that at one point during this crisis you gave an order to shoot down any civilian airliner that approached the Capitol? Was that a difficult decision to make?

The President. I gave our military the orders necessary to protect Americans, do whatever it would take to protect Americans. And of course that's difficult. Never did anybody's thought process about how to protect America—did we ever think that the evildoers would fly not one but four commercial aircraft into precious U.S. targets—never. And so, obviously, when I was told what was taking place, when I was informed that an unidentified aircraft was headed to the heart of the Capital, I was concerned. I wasn't concerned about my decision. I was more concerned about the lives of innocent Americans. I had realized there on the ground in Florida, we were under attack. But never did I dream we would have been under attack this way.

That's why I say to the American people we've never seen this kind of evil before. But the evildoers have never seen the American people in action before, either, and they're about to find out.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:23 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee of India. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to Employees in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building and an Exchange With Reporters

September 17, 2001

The President. I'm here to remind people that the best way to fight terrorism is to not let terrorism intimidate America. A lot of people who work in this building were deeply worried about their lives last week. There are a lot of courageous people here, and they're coming back to work. And I want to thank them for that and remind them we've all got a job to do, people digging out the rubble in New York have got a job to do, those of us in Government have a job to do.

Taliban

Q. Mr. President, any reaction to the Taliban's refusal to——

The President. I'll talk to you all later.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:58 a.m. outside the cafeteria. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to Employees at the Pentagon and an Exchange With Reporters in Arlington, Virginia

September 17, 2001

The President. First, let me start off by saying to members of the Pentagon press—the Secretary told me about how you conducted your business on that fateful day. I want to congratulate you and thank you. Many of your members of the Pentagon press went out to help in the evacuation and the aid of the people who work here in the Pentagon, and the country appreciates that very much. Thank you. Pass the word on to your colleagues, as well.